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Rolling Stone

Lennon Remembers, Part Two

In part two of a raw and remarkably candid interview, Lennon tells the stories behind some of the Beatles' biggest songs, goes in depth about the ongoing legal slog with his former bandmates and explains why he "[doesn't] believe in the Beatles myth."

by: Jann S. Wenner

John Lennon and Yoko Ono on the cover of 'Rolling Stone.'
Annie Leibovitz

Would you take it all back?
What?

Being a Beatle?
If I could be a fuckin' fisherman I would. If I had the capabilities of being something other than I am, I would. It's no fun being an artist. You know what it's like, writing, it's

torture. I read about Van Gogh, Beethoven, any of the fuckers. If they had psychiatrists, we wouldn't have had Gauguin's great pictures. These bastards are just sucking us to death; that's about all that we can do, is do it like circus animals.

I resent being an artist, in that respect, I resent performing for fucking idiots who don't know anything. They can't feel. I'm the one that's feeling, because I'm the one that is expressing. They live vicariously through me and other artists, and we are the ones . . . even with the boxers – when Oscar comes in the ring, they're booing the shit out of him, he only hits Clay once and they're all cheering him. I'd sooner be in the audience, really, but I'm not capable of it.

One of my big things is that I wish to be a fisherman. I know it sounds silly – and I'd sooner be rich than poor, and all the rest of that shit – but I wish the pain was ignorance or bliss or something. If you don't know, man, then there's no pain; that's how I express it.

What do you think the effect was of the Beatles on the history of Britain?
I don't know about the "history"; the people who are in control and in power, and the class system and the whole bullshit bourgeoisie is exactly the same, except there is a lot of fag middle class kids with long, long hair walking around London in trendy clothes, and Kenneth Tynan is making a fortune out of the word "fuck." Apart from that, nothing happened. We all dressed up, the same bastards are in control, the same people are runnin' everything. It is exactly the same.

We've grown up a little, all of us, there has been a change and we're all a bit freer and all that, but it's the same game. Shit, they're doing exactly the same thing, selling arms to South Africa, killing blacks on the street, people are living in fucking poverty, with rats crawling over them. It just makes you puke, and I woke up to *that* too.

The dream is over. It's just the same, only I'm thirty, and a lot of people have got long hair. That's what it is, man, nothing happened except that we grew up, we did our thing – just like they were telling us. You kids – most of the so called "now generation" are getting a job. We're a minority, you know, people like us always were, but maybe we are a slightly larger minority because of maybe something or other.

Why do you think the impact of the Beatles was so much bigger in America than it was in England?
The same reason that American stars are so much bigger in England: the grass is greener. We were really professional by the time we got to the States; we had learned the whole game. When we arrived here we knew how to handle the press; the British press were the toughest in the world and we could handle anything. We were all right.

On the plane over, I was thinking "Oh, we won't make it," or I said it on a film or something, but that's that side of me. We knew we would wipe you out if we could just get a grip on you. We were new.

And when we got here, you were all walking around in fuckin' bermuda shorts, with Boston crew cuts and stuff on your teeth. Now they're telling us, they're all saying, "Beatles are *passé* and this is like that, man." The chicks looked like fuckin' 1940 horses. There was no conception of dress or any of that jazz. We just thought "what an ugly race," it looked just disgusting. We thought how hip we were, but, of course, we weren't. It was just the five of us, us and the Stones were really the hip ones; the rest of England were just the same as they ever were.

You tend to get nationalistic, and we would really laugh at America, except for its music. It was the black music we dug, and over here even the blacks were laughing at people like Chuck Berry and the blues singers; the blacks thought it wasn't sharp to dig the really funky music, and the whites only listened to Jan and Dean and all that. We felt that we had the message which was "listen to this music." It was the same in Liverpool, we felt very exclusive and underground in Liverpool, listening to Richie Barret and Barrett Strong, and all those old-time records. Nobody was listening to any of them except Eric Burdon in Newcastle and Mick Jagger in London. It was that lonely, it was fantastic. When we came over here and it was the same – nobody was listening to rock and roll or to black music in America – we felt as though we were coming to the land of its origin but nobody wanted to know about it.

What part did you ever play in the songs that are heavily identified with Paul, like "Yesterday"?
"Yesterday," I had nothing to do with.

"Eleanor Rigby"?
"Eleanor Rigby" I wrote a good half of the lyrics or more.

When did Paul show you "Yesterday"?
I don't remember – I really don't remember, it was a long time ago. I think he was . . . I really don't remember, it just sort of appeared.

Who do you think has done the best versions of your stuff?
I can't think of anybody.

Did you hear Ike and Tina Turner doing "Come Together"?
Yeah, I didn't think they did too much of a job on it, I think they could have done it better. They did a better "Honky Tonk Woman."

Ray Charles doing "Yesterday"?
That was quite nice.

And you had Otis doing "Day Tripper," what did you think of that?
I don't think he did a very good job on "Day Tripper."

I never went much for the covers. It doesn't interest me, really. I like people doing them – I've heard some nice versions on "In My Life," I don't know who it was, though.

[Judy Collins], José Feliciano did "Help" quite nice once. I like people doing it, I get a kick out of it. I thought it was interesting that Nina Simone did a sort of answer to "Revolution." That was very good – it was sort of like "Revolution," but not quite. That I sort of enjoyed, somebody who reacted immediately to what I had said.

Who wrote "Nowhere Man"?
Me, me.

Did you write that about anybody in particular?
Probably about myself. I remember I was just going through this paranoia trying to write something and nothing would come out so I just lay down and tried to not write and then this came out, the whole thing came out in one gulp.

What songs really stick in your mind as being Lennon-McCartney songs?
"I Want to Hold Your Hand," "From Me To You," "She Loves You" – I'd have to have the list, there's so many, trillions of 'em. Those are the ones. In a rock band you have to make singles, you have to keep writing them. Plenty more. We both had our fingers in each others pies.

I remember that the simplicity on the new album was evident on the Beatles double album. It was evident in "She's So Heavy," in fact a reviewer wrote of "She's So Heavy": "He seems to have lost his talent for lyrics, it's so simple and boring." "She's So Heavy" was about Yoko. When it gets down to it, like she said, when you're drowning you don't say "I would be incredibly pleased if someone would have the foresight to notice me drowning and come and help me," you just *scream*. And in "She's So Heavy," I just sang "I want you, I want you so bad, she's so heavy, I want you," like that. I started simplifying my lyrics then, on the double album.

A song from the 'Help' album, like "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away." How did you write that? What were the circumstances? Where were you?
I was in Kenwood and I would just be songwriting. The period would be for songwriting and so every day I would attempt to write a song and it's one of those that you sort of sing a bit sadly to yourself, "Here I stand, head in hand. . . ."

I started thinking about my own emotions – I don't know when exactly it started like "I'm a Loser" or "Hide Your Love Away" or those kind of things – instead of projecting myself into a situation I would just try to express what I felt about myself which I'd done in me books. I think it was Dylan helped me realize that – not by any discussion or anything but just by hearing his work – I had a sort of professional songwriter's attitude to writing pop songs; he would turn out a certain style of song for a single and we would do a certain style of thing for this and the other thing. I was already a stylized songwriter on the first album. But to express myself I would write *Spaniard in the Works* or *In His Own Write*, the personal stories which were expressive of my personal emotions. I'd have a separate song-writing John Lennon who wrote songs for the sort of meat market, and I didn't consider them – the lyrics or anything – to have any depth at

all. They were just a joke. Then I started being me about the songs, not writing them objectively, but subjectively.

What about on *Rubber Soul*, "Norwegian Wood"?
I was trying to write about an affair without letting me wife know I was writing about an affair, so it was very gobbledegook. I was sort of writing from my experiences, girls' flats, things like that.

Where did you write that?
I wrote it at Kenwood.

When did you decide to put a sitar on it?
I think it was at the studio. George had just got the sitar and I said "Could you play this piece?" We went through many different sort of versions of the song, it was never right and I was getting very angry about it, it wasn't coming out like I said. They said, "Well just do it how you want to do it" and I said, "Well I just want to do it like this." They let me go and I did the guitar very loudly into the mike and sang it at the same time and then George had the sitar and I asked him could he play the piece that I'd written, you know, dee diddley dee diddley dee, that bit, and he was not sure whether he could play it yet because he hadn't done much on the sitar but he was willing to have a go, as is his wont, and he learned the bit and dubbed it on after. I think we did it in sections.

You also have a song on that album "In My Life." When did you write that?
I wrote that in Kenwood. I used to write upstairs where I had about ten Brunell tape recorders all linked up, I still have them, I'd mastered them over the period of a year or two – I could never make a rock and roll record but I could make some far out stuff on it. I wrote it upstairs, that was one where I wrote the lyrics first and then sang it. That was usually the case with things like "In My Life" and "Universe" and some of the ones that stand out a bit.

Would you just record yourself and a guitar on a tape and then bring it in to the studio?
I would do that just to get an impression of what it sounded like *sung* and to hear it back for judging it – you never know 'til you hear the song yourself. I would double track the guitar or the voice or something on the tape. I think on "Norwegian Wood" and "In My Life" Paul helped with the middle eight, to give credit where it's due.

From the same period, same time, I never liked "Run For Your Life," because it was a song I just knocked off. It was inspired from – this is a very vague connection – from "Baby Let's Play House." There was a line on it – I used to like specific lines from songs – "I'd rather see you dead, little girl, than to be with another man" – so I wrote it around that but I didn't think it was that important. "Girl" I liked because I was, in a way, trying to say something or other about Christianity which I was opposed to at the time.

Why Christianity in that song?
Because I was brought up in the church. One of the reviews of *In His Own Write* was that they tried to put me in this satire boom with Peter Cook and those people that came out of Cambridge, saying well he's just satirizing the normal things like the church and the state, which is what I did in *In His Own Write*. Those are the things that you keep satirizing because they're the only things. I was pretty heavy on the church in both books, but it was never picked up although it was obviously there. I was just talking about Christianity in that – a thing like you have to be tortured to attain heaven. I'm only saying that I was talking about "pain will lead to pleasure" in "Girl" and that was sort of the Catholic Christian concept – be tortured and then it'll be alright, which seems to be a bit true but not in their concept of it. But I didn't believe in that, that you *have* to be tortured to attain anything, it just so happens that you were.

Let me ask you about one on the double album, "Glass Onion." You set out to write a little message to the audience.
Yeah, I was having a laugh because there'd been so much gobbledegook about *Pepper,* play it backwards and you stand on your head and all that.

Even now, I just saw Mel Torme on TV the other day saying that "Lucy" was written to promote drugs and so was "A Little Help From My Friends" and none of them were at all – "A Little Help From My Friends" only says get high in it, it's really about a little help from my friends, it's a sincere message. Paul had the line about "little help from my friends," I'm not sure, he had some kind of structure for it and – we wrote it pretty well 50-50 but it was based on his original idea.

Why did you make "Revolution"?
Which one?

Both.
There's three of them.

Starting with the single.
When George and Paul and all of them were on holiday, I made "Revolution" which is on the LP and "Revolution #9." I wanted to put it out as a single, I had it all prepared, but they came by, and said it wasn't good enough. And we put out what? "Hello Goodbye" or some shit like that? No, we put out "Hey Jude," which was worth it – I'm sorry – but we could have had both.

I wanted to put what I felt about revolution; I thought it was time we fuckin' spoke about it, the same as I thought it was about time we stopped not answering about the Vietnamese War when we were on tour with Brian Epstein and had to tell him, "We're going to talk about the war this time and we're not going to just waffle." I wanted to say what I thought about revolution.

I had been thinking about it up in the hills in India. I still had this "God will save us" feeling about it, that it's going to be all right (even now I'm saying "Hold on, John, it's

going to be all right," otherwise, I won't hold on) but that's why I did it, I wanted to talk, I wanted to say my piece about revolution. I wanted to tell you, or whoever listens, to communicate, to say "What do you say? This is what I say."

On one version I said "Count me in" about violence, in or out, because I wasn't sure. But the version we put out said "Count me out," because I don't fancy a violent revolution happening all over. I don't want to die; but I begin to think what else can happen, you know, it seems inevitable.

"Revolution #9" was an unconscious picture of what I actually think will happen when it happens; that was just like a drawing of revolution. All the thing was made with loops, I had about thirty loops going, fed them onto one basic track. I was getting classical tapes, going upstairs and chopping them up, making it backwards and things like that, to get the sound effects. One thing was an engineer's testing tape and it would come on with a voice saying "This is EMI Test Series #9." I just cut up whatever he said and I'd number nine it. Nine turned out to be my birthday and my lucky number and everything. I didn't realize it; it was just so funny the voice saying "Number nine"; it was like a joke, bringing number nine into it all the time, that's all it was.

Yoko: It also turns out to be the highest number you know, one, two, etc., up to nine.

John: There are many symbolic things about it but it just happened you know, just an engineer's tape and I was just using all the bits to make a montage. I really wanted that released.

So that's my feeling. The idea was don't aggravate the pig by waving the thing that aggravates – by waving the Red flag in his face. You know, I really thought that love would save us all. But now I'm wearing a Chairman Mao badge.

I'm just beginning to think he's doing a good job. I would never know until I went to China. I'm not going to be like that, I was just always interested enough to sing about him. I just wondered what the kids who were actually Maoists were doing. I wondered what their motive was and what was really going on. I thought if they wanted revolution, if they really want to be subtle, what's the point of saying "I'm a Maoist and why don't you shoot me down?" I thought that wasn't a very clever way of getting what they wanted.

You don't really believe that we are headed for a violent revolution?
I don't know; I've got no more conception than you. I can't see . . . eventually it'll happen, like it will happen – it has to happen; what else can happen? It might happen now, or it might happen in a hundred years, but. . . .

Having a violent revolution now might just be the end of the world.
Not necessarily. They say that every time, but I don't really believe it, you see. If it is, OK, I'm back to where I was when I was 17 and at 17 I used to wish a fuckin' earthquake or revolution would happen so that I could go out and steal and do what the

blacks are doing now. If I was black, I'd be all for it; if I were 17 I'd be all for it, too. What have you got to lose? Now I've got something to lose. I don't want to die, and I don't want to be hurt physically, but if they blow the world up, fuck it, we're all out of our pain then, forget it, no more problems!

You sing, "Hold on world. . . ."
I sing "Hold on John," too, because I don't want to die. I don't want to be hurt, and "please don't hit me."

You think by holding on it will be all right?
It's only going to be all right – it's now, this moment. That's all right this moment, and hold on now; we might have a cup of tea or we might get a moment's happiness any minute now, so that's what it's all about, just moment by moment; that's how we're living, cherishing each day and dreading it, too. It might be your last day – you might get run over by a car – and I'm really beginning to cherish it. I cherish life.

"Happiness is a Warm Gun" is a nice song.
Oh, I like that one of my best, I had forgotten about that. Oh, I love it. I think it's a beautiful song. I like all the different things that are happening in it. Like "God," I had put together some three sections of different songs, it was meant to be – it seemed to run through all the different kinds of rock music.

It wasn't about "H" at all. "Lucy In The Sky" with diamonds which I swear to God, or swear to Mao, or to anybody you like, I had no idea spelled L.S.D. – and "Happiness" – George Martin had a book on guns which he had told me about – I can't remember – or I think he showed me a cover of a magazine that said "Happiness Is A Warm Gun." It was a gun magazine, that's it: I read it, thought it was a fantastic, insane thing to say. A warm gun means that you just shot something.

When did you realize that those were the initials of "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds"?
Only after I read it or somebody told me, like you coming up. I didn't even see it on the label. I didn't look at the initials. I don't look – I mean I never play things backwards. I listened to it as I made it. It's like there will be things on this one, if you fiddle about with it. I don't know what they are. Everytime after that though I would look at the titles to see what it said, and usually they never said anything.

You said to me "*Sgt. Pepper* is the one." That was the album?
Well, it was a peak. Paul and I were definitely working together, especially on "A Day In The Life" that was a real . . . The way we wrote a lot of the time: you'd write the good bit, the part that was easy, like "I read the news today" or whatever it was, then when you got stuck or whenever it got hard, instead of carrying on, you just drop it; then we would meet each other, and I would sing half, and he would be inspired to write the next bit and vice versa. He was a bit shy about it because I think he thought it's already a good song. Sometimes we wouldn't let each other interfere with a song either, because you tend to be a bit lax with someone else's stuff, you experiment a bit.

So we were doing it in his room with the piano. He said "Should we do this?" "Yeah, let's do that."

I keep saying that I always preferred the double album, because *my* music is better on the double album; I don't care about the whole concept of *Pepper,* it might be better, but the music was better for me on the double album, because I'm being myself on it. I think it's as simple as the new album, like "I'm So Tired" is just the guitar. I felt more at ease with that than the production. I don't like production so much. But *Pepper* was a peak all right.

Yoko: People think that's the peak and I'm just so amazed. . . . John's done all that Beatle stuff. But this new album of John's is a real peak, that's higher than any other thing he has done.

John: Thank you, dear.

Do you think it is?
Yeah, sure. I think it's "Sergeant Lennon." I don't really know how it will sink in, where it will lie, in the spectrum of rock and roll and the generation and all the rest of it, but I know what it is. It's something else, it's another door.

Yoko: That you don't even know yet or realize it.

John: I'm sneakingly aware of it, but not fully, until it is all over like anyone else. We didn't really know what *Pepper* was going to do or what anything was going to do. I had a feeling, but, I don't know whether it's going to settle down in a minority position. The new album could do that because, in one way it's terribly uncommercial, it's so miserable in a way and heavy, but it's reality, and I'm not going to veer away from it for anything.

Yoko: I was thinking that Tom Jones is like medium without message, but John's stuff is like the *message* is the medium; it's the message. He didn't need any decorative sound, or decorativeness about it. That is why in some songs it seems that the accompaniment is simple but it's like an urgent message, I feel.

John: Thank you and good night.

How did you get in touch with Allen Klein?
I got various messages through various people that Allen Klein would like to talk to you. Really, it was Mick who got us together. I mean I knew who he was. I didn't want to talk. I had heard about him over the years; the first time I heard about him was that he said one day he would have the Beatles, and this was when Brian was with us. He had offered Brian this good deal, which in retrospect was something Brian should have done. This was years ago. I had heard about all these dreadful rumors about him but I could never coordinate it with the fact that the Stones seemed to be going on and on

with him and nobody ever said a word. Mick's not the type to just clam up, so I started thinking he must be all right.

But still, when I heard he wanted to see me, I got nervous, because "some business man wants to see me, it's going to be business and business makes me nervous." Finally I got a message from Mick – Allen had really set up the whole deal you know, Mick and us nearly went into Apple together a few years back and we had big meetings and discussions about the studios and all of that, but it never happened – and Allen would have come in that way. That was after Brian died, but it didn't happen. All these approaches were coming from all over the place, and then I met him at the "Rock and Roll Circus" [the TV film] which has never been seen, with John and Yoko performing together for the first time with a crazy violinist and Keith on bass and all that–I always regret that – and I met him there. I didn't know what to make of him; we just shook hands and then . . . Yoko, what happened next?

Yoko: Then one day we finally decided to meet him, you remember. . . .

John: I don't know, we just decided to meet him. Did we call him or did we accept *his* call? He called me once, but I never accepted it; I never accepted the call at the house; I think in Kenwood once he called, and I didn't take it, I was too nervous.

I don't like talking to strangers as it is, strangers want to talk about reality, or something else, so I didn't accept the call. Then finally did we accept the call or did I put a call through? He'll tell you.

Do you know he knows the lyrics to every fuckin' song you could ever imagine from the Twenties on? I was with him last night eating, and I was just singing a few things – Yoko thinks I know every song, I know millions of songs – I'm like a juke box, thousands upon millions. G chords and so on – but Allen not only knows it, but he knows every fuckin' word, even the chorus. He's got a memory like *that,* so ask him. But then we met and it was very traumatic.

In what way?
We are both very nervous. He was nervous as shit, and I was nervous as shit, and Yoko was nervous. We met at the Dorchester, we went up to his room, and we just went in you know.

He was sitting there all nervous. He was all alone, he didn't have any of his helpers around, because he didn't want to do anything like that. But he was very nervous, you could see it in his face. When I saw that I felt better. We talked to him a few hours, and we decided that night, he was it!

What made you decide that?
He not only knew my work, and the lyrics that I had written but he also understood them, and from *way* back. That was it. If he knew what I was saying and followed my work, then that was pretty damn good, because it's hard to see me, John Lennon,

amongst that. He talked sense about what had happened. He just said what was going on, and I just knew.

He is a very intelligent guy; he told me what was happening with the Beatles, and my relationship with Paul and George and Ringo. He knew every damn thing about us, the same as he knows everything about the Stones. He's a fuckin' sharp man.

There are things he doesn't know, but when it comes to that kind of business, he knows. And anybody that knew me that well – without having met me – had to be a guy I could let look after me.

So I wrote to Sir Joe Lockwood that night. We were so pleased, I didn't care what the others might say. I told Allen, "You can handle *me*."

Yoko had become my advisor so that I wouldn't go into Maharishi's anymore. It was Derek and Yoko and I interviewing people coming in to take over Apple when we were running it at Wigmore Street, and Yoko would sit behind me and I'd play me games and she would tell me what they were doing when I blinked, and how they were in her opinion, because she wasn't as stupid or emotional as me. And I've never had that except when the Beatles were against the world I did have the cooperation of a good mind like Paul's. It was us against them.

So you wrote Lockwood?
So I wrote Lockwood saying: "Dear Sir Joe: From now on Allen Klein handles all my stuff," Allen has it framed somewhere. I posted it that night and Allen couldn't believe it. He was so excited – "At last, at last!" He was trying not to push, and I was just saying "You can handle me, and I'll tell the others you seem all right and you can come and meet George and everything, and Paul and all of them."

I had to present a case to them, and Allen had to talk to them himself. And of course, I promoted him in the fashion in which you will see me promoting or talking about something. I was enthusiastic about him and I was relieved because I had met a lot of people including Lord Beeching who was one of the top people in Britain and all that. Paul had told me, "Go and see Lord Beeching" so I went. I mean I'm a good boy, man, and I saw Lord Beeching and he was no help at all. I mean, he was all right. Paul was in America getting Eastman and I was interviewing all these so-called top people, and they were animals. Allen was a human being, the same as Brian was a human being. It was the same thing with Brian in the early days, it was an assessment; I make a lot of mistakes characterwise, but now and then I make a good one and Allen is one, Yoko is one and Brian was one. I am closer to him than to anybody else, outside of Yoko.

How did the rest of them react?
I don't remember. They were nervous like me, because this terrible man who had got the Rolling Stones, and said that he was going to get the Beatles years ago – you don't know *what's* going on. I can't remember. I don't know what we did next. . . .

Yoko*:* So somebody said, please, let's see Allen and Eastman together, and see how it is.

John: Right. But what did I say to George then, did I ring them or something? I suppose I rung them.

Yoko: We were going to Apple all the time so we met George there.

John: What did I say? "This is Allen Klein, we met him last night." I just sort of said he was OK, and you should meet and all that.

[Paul meantime had met and married American photographer Linda Eastman whose father Lee and brother John were music business lawyers, who also wanted to "manage" the Beatle affairs.]

Then we got Paul. John Eastman had already been in, in fact, we almost signed ourselves over to the Eastmans at one time, because when Paul presented me with John Eastman, I thought well . . . when you're not presented with a real alternative, you take whatever is going. I would say "yes", like I said "Yes, let's do *Let It Be*. I have nothing to produce so I will go along," and we almost went away with Eastman. But then Eastman made the mistake of sending his son over and not coming over himself, to look after the Beatles, playing it a bit cool.

Finally, when we got near the point when Allen came in, the Eastmans panicked; yet I was still open. I liked Allen but I would have taken Eastman if he would have turned out something other than what he was.

We arranged to see Eastman and Klein together in a hotel where one of them was staying. For the four Beatles and Yoko to go and see them both. We hadn't been in there more than a few minutes when Lee Eastman was having something like an epileptic fit, and screaming at Allen, that he was "the lowest scum on earth," and calling him all sorts of names. Allen was sitting there, taking it, you know, just takin' it. Eastman was abusing him with class snobbery. What Eastman didn't know then is that Neil had been in New York and found out that Lee Eastman's real name was Lee Epstein! That's the kind of people they are. But Paul fell for that bullshit, because Eastman's got Picassos on the wall and because he's got some sort of East Coast suit; form and not substance. Now, that's McCartney. We were all still not sure and they brought in this fella, and he had a fuckin' fit.

We had thought it was one in a million but that was enough for me, soon as he started nailing Klein on his taste. Paul was getting in little digs about Allen's dress. I mean you just go and look at Paul's dress, or at his father, or anything – who the fuck does he think he is? Him talking about dress!

Man, so that was it, and we said, "fuck it!" I wouldn't let Eastman near me; I wouldn't let a fuckin' animal like that who has a mind like that near me. Who despises me, too,

despises me because of what I am and what I look like.

You know, these people like Eastman and Dick James and people like that, think that I'm an idiot. They really can't see me; they think I'm some kind of guy who got struck lucky, a pal of Paul's or something. They're so fuckin' stupid they don't know.

The reason Allen knew was because he knew who I was. He wasn't going on what a pretty face I've got. Eastman blew it, and then he went on to do it *again*. Where did he do it? Next time he did it was in the Apple office. He kept coming to me, trying to hold his madness down, this insanity that kept coming out. He was coming up to me saying "I can't tell you how much I admire you." Gortikov [the chairman of Capitol Records] does that too; you know them, full of praise, like "I can't tell you how much I've admired your work, John."

And I'm just watchin' this and I'm thinkin' "it's happening to me," and "thank you very much," and all that [To Yoko:] What was the second fit, because I want this out. What was the second time he blew it?

Yoko: In Apple or something.

John: He did it in front of everybody.

This was supposed to be the guy who was taking over the multi-million dollar corporation, and it was going to be slick. Paul was sort of intimating that Allen's business offices on Broadway were not nice enough as if that were any fuckin' difference! Eastman was in the good section of town. "Oh, boy, man, that's where it's at!" And Eastman's office has got class! I don't care if this is fuckin' red white and blue, I don't care what Allen dresses like, he's a human being, man.

So you said "No" to Eastman, and what did Paul do?
The more we said "no," the more he said "yes." Eastman went mad and shouted and all that. I didn't know what Paul was thinking when he was in the room; I mean, his heart must have sunk.

Yoko: They didn't even want to come to a meeting with Allen.

John: Eastman at first refused to meet Allen. He said "I will not meet such a low rat." What the fuck had Klein done? He'd never done a fuckin' thing – he'd been cleared of all this income tax shit – and even if he hadn't, what the fuck, how dare all these fuckin' wolves and sharks call him down for being what he is. How dare they insult anybody like that? They're fuckin' bastards. And Eastman is a Wasp Jew, man, and that's the worst kind of person on earth.

They refused to meet him. I said I don't talk to anybody unless I come along with Allen. They said "Come on, John, I want to meet you alone," and I said "I don't see any of you, unless Allen's with me."

Yoko: But the thing is that finally when they met, they invited Allen to the Harvard Club. Can you imagine that? Just to show, you know. . . .

John: When Eastman was finally signing the Northern Songs deal, God knows what it was, I had to jump over a fence to get Paul's signature for something which finally secured us our position, and then also Eastman lost his temper. He really started insulting me then. Eastman, he knew the game was over. This was in London: three of us had to go there to get his final approval on Paul's signature, which we got.

He's initiating all these things just to slow us down, like an immigration officer, really putting us through it. I'm sitting there, waiting, and we're thinking, "sign it you fuckin' idiot, and let's get out," but he starts insulting me; Yoko said to him "Will you please stop insulting my husband." She was saying "Don't call my husband stupid." I wasn't saying anything but "sign it and give me the signature, just put your initials on it, Epstein," I was thinking let's get out of here, and we'll wrap you up, and that's what we did.

You can't believe it, man, epileptic fits, and they expected to run the company. Allen even offered to let John Eastman be the lawyer on the deals we were making with Northern Songs, but they were screwing everything Allen did, by putting on an argument. It fucked that Northern Songs deal and all that, but we still came out with all the money. Whatever they could do they did but in the end they couldn't out-maneuver him. Klein was the only one who knew exactly what was going on. He not only knew our characters, and what the relationship between the group was, but he also knows his business, he knows who's who in the group, what you have to do to get things done, and he knew about every fuckin' contract and paper we ever had. He understood. Eastman was just making judgments and saying things to Paul based on something that he had never seen. It was a wipe-out, you can't imagine. The real story will come out, because Allen knows every detail and he remembers everything we've said.

Yoko: The first approach was, well . . . he knew I went to Sarah Lawrence. He was saying "Kafkaesque" and all of that, and talking in a very "in" way; "we're middle class, aren't we?"

But the point is that the Eastman family doesn't know John's a drop-out – I was sick and tired of that middle class thing and I married a "working class hero": And if he is a true aristocrat, he is not going to invite Allen to the Harvard Club, but would make sure that he invites Allen to somewhere Allen would enjoy.

So what was going down with Paul then?
Paul was getting more and more uptight until Paul wouldn't speak to us. He told us "You speak to my lawyer."

When did you first start having unpleasant words with Paul?
We never had unpleasant words. It never got to a talking thing, you see, it just got that

Paul would say "Speak to my lawyer, I don't want to speak about business anymore" which meant, "I'm going to drag my feet and try and fuck you."

When the whole Northern thing was going on, we tried to save our fuckin' stuff [the publishing rights to most of the Lennon/McCartney songs] and he was playing hard to get, like a fuckin' chick, because *he* hadn't thought of it. It was a pure ego game, and I got into the ego thing, of course, but I was really fighting for our fuckin' business, and what I believed was our money. It wasn't just because I'd found Allen. I would have dropped Allen if Eastman had been something; but he was an animal, a fuckin' stupid middle-class pig, and thought he could con me with fuckin' talking about Kafka, and shit, and Picasso and DeKooning, for Christ's sake, and I shit on the fuckin' lot of them.

I don't even know who the fuck they are; I just know that it's something that somebody has got hung up on the wall that he thinks is an investment.

What was the state of the Beatles' business at that point?
Chaos! Exactly what I've said in the *Rolling Stone***,** wasn't it – it all happens in the *Rolling Stone***!**

Steve Maltz, I think; Allen said I must have gotten it from Steve Maltz, this accountant we had had, a young guy, who just sent me a letter one day saying, "You're in chaos, you're losing money, there is so much a week going out of Apple."

People were robbing us and living on us to the tune of . . . 18 or 20 thousand pounds a week, was rolling out of Apple and nobody was doing anything about it. All our buddies that worked for us for fifty years, were all just living and drinking and eating like fuckin' Rome, and I suddenly realized it and – I said to you – "we're losing money at such a rate that we would have been broke, really broke."

We didn't have anything in the bank really, none of us did. Paul and I could have probably floated, but we were sinking fast. It was just hell, and it had to stop. When Allen heard me say that – he read it in *Stone* – he came over right away. As soon as he realized that I knew what was going on, he thought to himself, "Now I can get through." Until somebody knows that they are on shit street, how can somebody come and get in . . . it's just like somebody coming up to me *now* and saying "I want to help you with the business." I would say "I've got somebody," or "I'm doing all right, Jack. . . . " As soon as Allen realized that I realized all that was going on, he came over.

How much money do you have now?
I'm not telling. Lots more than I ever had before. Allen has got me more real money in the bank than I've ever had in the whole period and I've got money that I earned for eight or ten years of my fuckin' life, instead of all the Dick James Music Company having it.

How much were you making in that period?
I don't know, I just know it was millions. Brian was a not a good businessman. He had

a flair for presenting things, he was more theatrical than business. He was hyped a lot. He was advised by a gang of crooks, really. That's what went on, and the battle is still going on for the Beatles' rights. The latest one is the Lew Grade thing. If you read Cashbox you'll see what's happening – we've put in a claim to Lew Grade for five million pounds [$12,000,000], in unpaid royalties. They have been underpaying us for years. Dick James – the whole lot of them – sold us out. They still think we're like Tommy Steele or some fuckin' product. None of them realized – simply because of *A Hard Day's Night* – we had to wake up one day, and we were not the same as the last generation of stars or whatever they were called.

How did Paul get down to telling Ringo he was going to get him someday?
It was Paul's new album and he wanted to put it out at the same time *Let It Be* was scheduled to come out. We weren't against him putting an album out, I mean I'd done it, and I didn't think it was any different. Mine happened to be Toronto, because that happened to happen. If I hadn't gone to Toronto, I would have made an album, probably. I was half hoping I would make single after single until there was enough for an album *that* way, because I'm lazy.

We didn't want to put out *Let It Be* and Paul's at the same time. It would have killed the sales. In the old days we used to watch it: if the Stones were coming out . . . we would ask Brian, "who is coming out"? and he would tell us who's coming out. We could always beat everyone, but what is the point of losing sales? There has to be timing. Mick timed it. We never came out together, we're not idiots. With Elvis, we miss every one; I would miss Tom Jones, anybody, now. I don't want to fight on the charts, I want to get in when the going is good. It would have killed – Paul's was just an ego game – it would have killed *Let It Be*.

We asked Ringo to go and talk to him because Ringo – the real fighting had been going on between me and Paul, because of Eastman and Klein, and we were on the opposite ends of our bats – Ringo had not taken sides, or anything like that, and he had been straight about it, and we thought that Ringo would be able to talk fairly, to Paul–I mean if Ringo agreed that it was unfair, then it was unfair. (At one time Paul wanted a fuckin' extra vote on a voting trust, but that was the same as like the four of us at a table, except that Paul has two votes. I mean, Eastman – something was going on . . . Paul thought he was the fuckin' Beatles, and he never fucking was, never . . . none of us were the fucking Beatles, four of us were.) Ringo went and asked him and he attacked Ringo and he started threatening him and everything, and that was the kibosh for Ringo. What the situation is now, I don't know.

Allen says that you are all going to get together in a few months.
I think that we have to have a meeting shortly, because we are all – we all agreed to meet sometime in February, I think, to see where we are at. Financially, its business, or whatever.

Do you think you will record together again?
I record with Yoko, but I'm not going to record with another ego-maniac. There is only

room for one on an album nowadays. There is no point, there is just no point at all. There was a reason to do it at one time, but there is no reason to do it anymore.

I had a group, I was the singer and the leader; I met Paul and I made a decision whether to – and he made a decision too – have him in the group: was it better to have a guy who was better than the people I had in, obviously, or not? To make the group stronger or to let me be stronger? That decision was to let Paul in and make the group stronger.

Well, from that, Paul introduced me to George, and Paul and I had to make the decision, or I had to make the decision, whether to let George in. I listened to George play, and I said "play 'Raunchy'" or whatever the old story is, and I let him in. I said "OK, you come in"; that was the three of us then. Then the rest of the group was thrown out gradually. It just happened like that, instead of going for the individual thing, we went for the strongest format, and for equals.

George is ten years younger than me, or some shit like that. I couldn't be bothered with him when he first came around. He used to follow me around like a bloody kid, hanging around all the time, I couldn't be bothered. He was a kid who played guitar, and he was a friend of Paul's which made it all easier. It took me years to come around to him, to start considering him as an equal or anything.

We had all sorts of different drummers all the time, because people who owned drum kits were few and far between; it was an expensive item. They were usually idiots. Then we got Pete Best, because we needed a drummer to go to Hamburg the next day. We passed the audition on our own with a stray drummer. There are other myths about Pete Best was the Beatles and Stuart Sutcliffe's mother is writing in England that *he* was the Beatles.

Are you the Beatles?
No, I'm not the Beatles. I'm me. Paul isn't the Beatles. Brian Epstein wasn't the Beatles, neither is Dick James. The Beatles are the Beatles. Separately, they are separate. George was a separate individual singer, with his own group as well, before he came in with us, the Rebel Rousers. Nobody is the Beatles. How could they be? We all had our roles to play.

You say on the record, "I don't believe in the Beatles."
Yeah. I don't believe in the Beatles, that's all. I don't believe in the Beatles myth. "I don't believe in the Beatles" – there is no other way of saying it, is there? I don't believe in them whatever they were supposed to be in everybody's head, including our own heads for a period. It was a dream. I don't believe in the dream anymore.

I made my mind up not to talk about all that shit, I'm sick of it, you know. I would like to talk about the album, I was going to say to you "Look, I don't want to talk about all that about the Beatles splitting up because it not only hurts me, and it always ends up looking like I'm blabbing off and attacking people." I don't want it.

How would you assess George's talents?
I don't want to assess him. George has not done his best work yet. His talents have developed over the years and he was working with two fucking brilliant songwriters, and he learned a lot from us. I wouldn't have minded being George, the invisible man, and learning what he learned. Maybe it was hard for him sometimes, because Paul and I are such ego-maniacs, but that's the game.

I'm interested in concepts and philosophies. I am not interested in wallpaper, which most music is.

What music do you listen to today?
If you want the record bit, since I've been listening to the radio here, I like a few things by Neil Young and something by Elton John. There are some really good sounds, but, then there is usually no follow-through. There will be a section of fantastic sound come over the radio, then you wait for the conclusion, or the concept or something to finish it off, but nothing happens except it just goes on to a jam session or whatever.

You've had a chance to listen to FM radio in New York. What have you heard?
Yeah. "My Sweet Lord." Every time I put the radio on it's "oh my Lord" – I'm beginning to think there must be a God! I knew there wasn't when "Hare Krishna" never made it on the polls with their own record, that really got me suspicious. We used to say to them, "you might get number one" and they'd say, "Higher than that."

What do we hear? It's interesting to hear Van Morrison. He seems to be doing nice stuff – sort of 1960s black music – he is one of them that became an American like Eric Burdon. I just never have time for a whole album. I only heard Neil Young twice – you can pick him out a mile away, the whole style. He writes some nice songs. I'm not stuck on Sweet Baby [James Taylor] – I'm getting to like him more hearing him on the radio, but I was never struck by his stuff. I like Creedence Clearwater. They make beautiful Clearwater music – they make good rock and roll music. You see it's difficult when you ask me what I like, there's lots of stuff I've heard that I think is fantastic on the radio here, but I haven't caught who they are half the time.

I'm interested in things with more of a world-wide . . . I'm interested in, what's it called, something that means something for everyone, not just for a few kids listening to wallpaper. I am just as interested in poetry or whatever or art, and always have been, that's been my hang-up, you know – continually trying to be Shakespeare or whatever it is. That's what I'm doing, I'm not pissing about. I consider I'm up against *them*. I'm not competing myself against Elvis. Rock just happens to be the media which I was born into, it was the one, that's all. Those people picked up paint brushes, and Van Gogh probably wanted to be Renoir or whoever went before him just as I wanted to be Elvis or whatever the shit it is. I'm not interested in good guitarists. I'm in the game of all those things, of concept and philosophy, ways of life, and whole movements in history. Just like Van Gogh was or any other of those fuckin' people – they are no more or less than I am or Yoko is – they were just living in those days. I'm interested in expressing

myself like they expressed it, in some way that will mean something to people in any country, in any language, and at any time in history.

When did you realize, that what you were doing transcended . . .
People like me are aware of their so-called genius at ten, eight, nine . . . I always wondered, "why has nobody discovered me?" In school, didn't they see that I'm cleverer than anybody in this school? That the teachers are stupid, too? That all they had was information that I didn't need.

I got fuckin' lost in being at high school. I used to say to me auntie "You throw my fuckin' poetry out, and you'll regret it when I'm famous," and she threw the bastard stuff out.

I never forgave her for not treating me like a fuckin' genius or whatever I was, when I was a child.

It was obvious to me. Why didn't they put me in art school? Why didn't they train me? Why would they keep forcing me to be a fuckin' cowboy like the rest of them? I was different, I was always different. Why didn't anybody notice me?

A couple of teachers would notice me, encourage me to be something or other, to draw or to paint – express myself. But most of the time they were trying to beat me into being a fuckin' dentist or a teacher. And then the fuckin' fans tried to beat me into being a fuckin' Beatle or an Engelbert Humperdinck, and the critics tried to beat me into being Paul McCartney.

Yoko: So you were very deprived in a way. . . .

John: That's what makes me what I am. It comes out, the people I meet have to say it themselves, because we get fuckin' kicked. Nobody says it, so you scream it: look at me, a genius, for fuck's sake! What do I have to do to prove to you son-of-a-bitches what I can do, and who I am? Don't dare, don't you dare fuckin' dare criticize my work like that. You, who don't know anything about it.

Fuckin' bullshit!

I know what Zappa is going through, and a half. I'm just coming out of it. I just have been in school again. I've had teachers ticking me off and marking my work. If nobody can recognize what I am then fuck 'em, it's the same for Yoko . . .

Yoko: That's why it's an amazing thing: after somebody has done something like the Beatles, they think that he's sort of satisfied, where actually the Beatles . . .

John: The Beatles was nothing.

Yoko: It was like cutting him down to a smaller size than he is.

John: I learned lots from Paul and George, in many ways, but they learned a damned sight lot from me – they learned a fucking lot from me. It's like George Martin, or anybody: just come back in 20 years' time and see what we're doing, and see who's doing what – don't put me – don't sort of mark my papers like I'm top of the math class or did I come in Number One in English Language, because I never did. Just assess me on what I am and what comes out of me mouth, and what me work is, don't mark me in classrooms. It's like I've just left school again! I just graduated from the school of Show Biz or whatever it was called.

Who do you think is good today? In any arts. . . .
The unfortunate thing about ego-maniacs is that they don't take much attention of other people's work. I only assess people on whether they are a danger to me or my work or not.

Yoko is as important to me as Paul and Dylan rolled into one. I don't think she will get recognition until she's dead. There's me, and maybe I could count the people on one hand that have any conception of what she is or what her mind is like, or what her work means to this fuckin' idiotic generation. She has the hope that she might be recognized. If I can't get recognized, and I'm doing it in a fuckin' clown's costume, I'm doing it on the streets, you know, I don't know what – I admire Yoko's work.

I admire "Fluxus," a New York-based group of artists founded by George Macuinas. I really think what they do is beautiful and important.

I admire Andy Warhol's work, I admire Zappa a bit, but he's a fuckin' intellectual – I can't think of anybody else. I admire people from the past. I admire Fellini. A few that Yoko's eduucated me to . . . She's educated me into things that I didn't know about before, because of the scene I was in; I'm getting to know some other great work that's been going on now and in the past – there is all sorts going on.

I still love Little Richard, and I love Jerry Lee Lewis. They're like primitive painters. . . .

Chuck Berry is one of the all-time great poets, a rock poet you could call him. He was well advanced of his time lyric-wise. We all owe a lot to him, including Dylan. I've loved everything he's done, ever. He was in a different class from the other performers, he was in the tradition of the great blues artists but he really wrote his own stuff – I know Richard did, but Berry *really* wrote stuff, just the lyrics were fantastic, even though we didn't know what he was saying half the time.

Yoko: I'm really getting into it.

John: We are both showing each other's experience to each other. When you play Yoko's music, I had the same thing: I had to open up to hear it – I had to get out the concept of what I wanted to hear . . . I had to allow abstract art or music in. She had to do the same for rock and roll, it was an intellectual exercise, because we're all boxed in.

We are all in little boxes, and somebody has to go in and rip your fuckin' head open for you to allow something else in.

A drug will do it. Acid will box your head open. Some artists will do it, but they usually have to be dead two hundred years to do it. All I ever learned in art school was about Van Gogh and stuff; they didn't teach me anything about anybody that was alive now, or they never taught me about Marcel Duchamp which I despised them for. Yoko has taught me about Duchamp and what he did, which is just out of this world. He would just put a bike wheel on display and he would say this is art, you cunts.

He wasn't Dalí; Dalí was all right, but he's like Mick, you know. I love Dalí, but fuckin' Duchamp was spot on. He was the first one to do that, just take an object from the street and put his name on it, and say this is art because I say it is.

Why Warhol?
Because he is an original, and he's great. He is an original great and he is in so much pain. He's got his fame, he's got his own cinema and all of that. I don't dig that junkie fag scene he lives in; I don't know whether he lives like that or what. I dig Heinz Soup cans. That was something, that wasn't just a pop art, or some stupid art. Warhol said it, nobody's else has said it – Heinz Soup. He's said that to us, and I thanked him for it.

What do you think of Fellini?
Fellini's just like Dalí, I suppose. It's a great meal to go and see Fellini, a great meal for your senses.

Like *Citizen Kane,* that's something else, too. Poor old Orson, he goes on Dick Cavett, and says "Please love me, now I'm a big fat man, and I've eaten all this food, and I did so well when I was younger, I can act, I can direct, and you're all very kind to me, but at the moment I don't do anything."

Do you see a time when you'll retire?
No. I couldn't, you know.

Yoko: He'll probably work until he's eighty or until he dies.

John: I can't foresee it. Even when you're a cripple you carry on painting. I would paint if I couldn't move. It doesn't matter, you see, when I was saying what Yoko did with "Greenfield Morning" – took half an inch she taped and none of us knew what we were doing, and I saw her create something. I saw her start from scratch with something we would normally throw away. With the other stuff we did, we were all good in the backing and everything went according to plan, it was a good session, but with "Greenfield Morning" and "Paper Shoes" there was nothing there for her to work with. She just took nothing – the way Spector did – that's the way the genius shows through any media. You give Yoko or Spector a piece of tape, two inches of tape, they can create a symphony out of it. You don't have to be trained in rock and roll to be a singer; I didn't have to be trained to be a singer: I can sing. Singing is singing to people who

enjoy what you're singing, not being able to hold notes – I don't have to be in rock and roll to create. When I'm an old man, we'll make wallpaper together, but just to have the same depth and impact. The message is the medium.

What is holding people back from understanding Yoko?
She was doing all right before she met Elvis. Howard Smith announced he was going to play her music on FM and all these idiots rang up and said "Don't you dare play it, she split the Beatles." She didn't split the Beatles and even if she did what does that have to do with it or her fucking record. She is a woman, and she's Japanese; there is racial prejudice against her and there is female prejudice against her. It's as simple as that.

Her work is far out, Yoko's bottom thing is as important as *Sgt. Pepper.* The real hip people know about it. There are a few people that know; there is a person in Paris who knows about her; a person in Moscow knows about her; there's a person in fucking China that knows about her. But in general, she can't be accepted, because she's too far out. It's hard to take. Her pain is such that she expresses herself in a way that hurts you – you cannot take it. That's why they couldn't take Van Gogh, it's too real, it hurts; that's why they kill you.

How did you meet Yoko?
I'm sure I've told you this many times. How did I meet Yoko? There was a sort of underground clique in London; John Dunbar, who was married to Marianne Faithful, had an art gallery in London called Indica and I'd been going around to galleries a bit on my off days in between records. I'd been to see a Takis exhibition, I don't know if you know what that means, he does multiple electro-magnetic sculptures, and a few exhibitions in different galleries who showed these sort of unknown artists or underground artists. I got the word that this amazing woman was putting on a show next week and there was going to be something about people in bags, in black bags, and it was going to be a bit of a happening and all that. So I went down to a preview of the show. I got there the night before it opened. I went in – she didn't know who I was or anything – I was wandering around, there was a couple of artsy type students that had been helping lying around there in the gallery, and I was looking at it and I was astounded. There was an apple on sale there for 200 quid, I thought it was fantastic – I got the humor in her work immediately. I didn't have to sort of have much knowledge about avant garde or underground art, but the humor got me straight away. There was a fresh apple on a stand, this was before Apple – and it was 200 quid to watch the apple decompose. But there was another piece which really decided me for-or-against the artist, a ladder which led to a painting which was hung on the ceiling. It looked like a blank canvas with a chain with a spy glass hanging on the end of it. This was near the door when you went in. I climbed the ladder, you look through the spyglass and in tiny little letters it says "yes".

So it was positive. I felt relieved. It's a great relief when you get up the ladder and you look through the spyglass and it doesn't say "no" or "fuck you" or something, it said "yes."

I was very impressed and John Dunbar sort of introduced us – neither of us knew who the hell we were, she didn't know who I was, she'd only heard of Ringo I think, it means apple in Japanese. And John Dunbar had been sort of hustling her saying "that's a good patron, you must go and talk to him or do something" because I was looking for action, I was expecting a happening and things like that. John Dunbar insisted she say hello to the millionaire, you know what I mean. And she came up and handed me a card which said "Breathe" on it, one of her instructions, so I just went (pant). That was our meeting.

Then I went away and the second time I met her was at a gallery opening of Claes Oldenberg in London. We were very shy, we sort of nodded at each other and we didn't know – she was standing behind me, I sort of looked away because I'm very shy with people, especially chicks. We just sort of smiled and stood frozen together in this cocktail party thing.

The next thing was she came to me to get some backing – like all the bastard underground do – for a show she was doing. She gave me her Grapefruit book and I used to read it and sometimes I'd get very annoyed by it; it would say things like "paint until you drop dead" or "bleed" and then sometimes I'd be very enlightened by it and I went through all the changes that people go through with her work – sometimes I'd have it by the bed and I'd open it and it would say something nice and it would be alright and then it would say something heavy and I wouldn't like it. There was all that and then she came to me to get some backing for a show and it was half a wind show. I gave her the money to back it and the show was, this was in a place called Lisson Gallery, another one of those underground places. For this whole show everything was in half: there was half a bed, half a room, half of everything, all beautifully cut in half and all painted white. And I said to her "why don't you sell the other half in bottles?" having caught on by then what the game was and she did that – this is still before we'd had any nuptials – and we still have the bottles from the show, it's my first. It was presented as "Yoko Plus Me" – that was our first public appearance. I didn't even go to see the show, I was too uptight.

When did you realize that you were in love with her?
It was beginning to happen; I would start looking at her book and that but I wasn't quite aware what was happening to me and then she did a thing called Dance Event where different cards kept coming through the door everyday saying "Breathe" and "Dance" and "Watch all the lights until dawn," and they upset me or made me happy depending on how I felt.

I'd get very upset about it being intellectual or all fucking avant garde, then I'd like it and then I wouldn't. Then I went to India with the Maharoonie and we were corresponding. The letters were still formal but they just had a little side to them. I nearly took her to India as I said but I still wasn't sure for what reason, I was still sort of kidding myself, with sort of artistic reasons, and all that.

When we got back from India we were talking to each other on the phone. I called her over, it was the middle of the night and Cyn was away, and I thought well now's the time if I'm gonna get to know her anymore. She came to the house and I didn't know what to do; so we went upstairs to my studio and I played her all the tapes that I'd made, all this far out stuff, some comedy stuff, and some electronic music. She was suitably impressed and then she said well let's make one ourselves so we made "Two Virgins." It was midnight when we started "Two Virgins," it was dawn when we finished, and then we made love at dawn. It was very beautiful.

What was it like getting married? Did you enjoy it?
It was very romantic. It's all in the song, "The Ballad of John and Yoko," if you want to know how it happened, it's in there. Gibraltar was like a little sunny dream. I couldn't find a white suit – I had sort of off-white corduroy trousers and a white jacket. Yoko had all white on.

What was your first peace event?
The first peace event was the Amsterdam Bed Peace when we got married.

What was that like–that was your first re-exposure to the public.
It was a nice high. We were on the seventh floor of the Hilton looking over Amsterdam – it was very crazy, the press came expecting to see us fucking in bed – they all heard John and Yoko were going to fuck in front of the press for peace. So when they all walked in – about 50 or 60 reporters flew over from London all sort of very edgy, and we were just sitting in pajamas saying "Peace, Brother," and that was it. On the peace thing there's lots of heavy discussions with intellectuals about how you should do it and how you shouldn't.

When you got done, did you feel satisfied with the Bed Peace. . . .
They were great events when you think that the world newspaper headlines were the fact that we were a married couple in bed talking about peace. It was one of our greater episodes. It was like being on tour without moving, sort of a big promotional thing. I think we did a good job for what we were doing, which was trying to get people to own up.

You chose the word "peace" and not "love," or another word that means the same thing. What did you like about the word "peace."
Yoko and I were discussing our different lives and careers when we first got together. What we had in common in a way, was that she'd done things for peace like standing in Trafalgar Square in a black bag and things like that – we were just trying to work out what we could do – and the Beatles had been singing about "love" and things. So we pooled our resources and came out with the Bed Peace – it was some way of doing something together that wouldn't involve me standing in Trafalgar Square in a black bag because I was too nervous to do that. Yoko didn't want to do anything that wasn't for peace.

Did you ever get any reaction from political leaders?
I don't know about the Bed-In. We got reaction to sending acorns – different heads of state actually planted their acorns, lots of them wrote to us answering about the acorns. We sent acorns to practically everybody in the world.

Who answered?
Well I believe Golda Meir said "I don't know who they are but if it's for peace, we're for it" or something like that. Scandinavia, somebody or other planted it. I think Haile Salassie planted his, I'm not sure. Some Queen somewhere. There was quite a few people that understood the idea.

Did you send one to Queen Elizabeth?
We sent one to Harold Wilson, I don't think we got a reply from Harold, did we?

What was it like meeting [Canadian] Prime Minister Trudeau? What was his response to you?
He was interested in us because he thought we might represent some sort of youth faction – he wants to know, like everybody does, really. I think he was very nervous – he was more nervous than we were when we met. We talked about everything – just anything you can think of. We spent about 40 minutes – it was 5 minutes longer than he'd spent with the heads of state which was the great glory of the time. He'd read *In His Own Write,* my book, and things like that. He liked the poetry side of it. We just wanted to see what they did, how they worked.

You appeared in the bags for Hanratty.
For Hanratty, yes, we did a sort of bag event, but it wasn't us in the bag it was somebody else. The best thing we did in a bag together was a press conference in Vienna. When they were showing Yoko's "*Rape*" on Austrian TV – they commissioned us to make the film and then we went over to Vienna to see it.

It was like a hotel press conference. We kept them out of the room. We came down the elevator in the bag and we went in and we got comfortable and they were all ushered in. It was a very strange scene because they'd never seen us before, or heard – Vienna is a pretty square place. A few people were saying, "C'mon, get out of the bags." And we wouldn't let 'em see us. They all stood back saying "Is it really John and Yoko?" and "What are you wearing and why are you doing this?" We said, "this is total communications with no prejudice." It was just great. They asked us to sing and we sang a few numbers. Yoko was singing a Japanese folk song, very nicely, just very straight we did it. And they never did see us.

What kind of a response did you get to the "War Is Over" poster?
We got a big response. The people that got in touch with us understood what a grand event it was apart from the message itself. We got just "thank you's" from lots of youths around the world – for all the things we were doing – that inspired *them* to do something. We had a lot of response from other than pop fans, which was interesting, from all walks of life and age. If I walk down the street now I'm more liable to get

talked to about peace than anything I've done. The first thing that happened in New York was just walking down the street and a woman just came up to me and said "Good luck with the peace thing," that's what goes on mainly – it's not about "I Want to Hold Your Hand." And that was interesting – it bridged a lot of gaps.

What do you think of those erotic lithographs now?
I don't think about them.

Why did you do them?
Because somebody said do some lithographs and I was in a drawing mood and I drew them.

You also did a scene for the Tynan play. How did that come about?
I met Tynan a few times around and about and he just said – this is about two years ago or more – he just said "I'm getting all these different people to write something erotic, will you do it?" And I told him that if I come up with something I'd do it and if I don't, I don't. So I came up with two lines, two or three lines which was the masturbation scene. It was a great childhood thing, everybody'd been masturbating and trying to think of something sexy and somebody'd shout Winston Churchill in the middle of it and break down. So I just wrote that down on a paper and told them to put whichever names in that suited the hero and they did it. I've never seen it.

What accounts for your great popularity?
Because I fuckin' did it. I copped out in that Beatle thing. I was like an artist that went off. . . . Have you never heard of like Dylan Thomas and all them who never fuckin' wrote but just went up drinking and Brendan Behan and all of them, they died of drink . . . everybody that's done anything is like that. I just got meself in a party, I was an emperor, I had millions of chicks, drugs, drink, power and everybody saying how great I was. How could I get out of it? It was just like being in a fuckin' train. I couldn't get out.

I couldn't create, either. I created a little, it came out, but I was in the party and you don't get out of a thing like that. It was fantastic! I came out of the sticks, I didn't hear about anything – Van Gogh was the most far out thing I had ever heard of. Even London was something we used to dream of, and London's nothing. I came out of the fuckin' sticks to take over the world it seemed to me. I was enjoying it, and I was trapped in it, too. I couldn't do anything about it, I was just going along for the ride. I was hooked, just like a junkie.

What did being from Liverpool have to do with your art?
It was a port. That means it was less hick than somewhere in the English Midlands, like the American Midwest or whatever you call it. We were a port, the second biggest port in England, between Manchester and Liverpool. The North is where the money was made in the Eighteen Hundreds, that was where all the brass and the heavy people were, and that's where the despised people were.

We were the ones that were looked down upon as animals by the Southerners, the Londoners. The Northerners in the States think that people are pigs down South and the people in New York think West Coast is hick. So we were hicksville.

We were a great amount of Irish descent and blacks and Chinamen, all sorts there. It was like San Francisco, you know. That San Francisco is something else! Why do you think Haight-Ashbury and all that happened there? It didn't happen in Los Angeles, it happened in San Francisco, where people are going. L.A. you pass through and get a hamburger.

There was nothing big in Liverpool; it wasn't American. It was going poor, a very poor city, and tough. But people have a sense of humor because they are in so much pain, so they are always cracking jokes. They are very witty, and it's an Irish place. It is where the Irish came when they ran out of potatoes, and it's where black people were left or worked as slaves or whatever.

It is cosmopolitan, and it's where the sailors would come home with the blues records from America on the ships. There is the biggest country & western following in England in Liverpool, besides London – always besides London, because there is more of it there.

I heard country and western music in Liverpool before I heard rock and roll. The people there – the Irish in Ireland are the same – they take their country and western music very seriously. There's a big heavy following of it. There were established folk, blues and country and western clubs in Liverpool before rock and roll and we were like the new kids coming out.

I remember the first guitar I ever saw. It belonged to a guy in a cowboy suit in a province of Liverpool, with stars, and a cowboy hat and a big dobro. They were real cowboys, and they took it seriously. There had been cowboys long before there was rock and roll.

What do you think of America?
I love it, and I hate it. America is where it's at. I should have been born in New York, I should have been born in the Village, that's where I belong. Why wasn't I born there? Paris was it in the Eighteenth Century, London I don't think has ever been it except literary-wise when Wilde and Shaw and all of them were there. New York was it.

I regret profoundly that I was not an American and not born in Greenwich Village. That's where I should have been. It never works that way. Everybody heads toward the center, that's why I'm here now. I'm here just to breathe it. It might be dying and there might be a lot of dirt in the air that you breathe, but this is where it's happening. You go to Europe to rest, like in the country. It's so overpowering, America, and I'm such a fuckin' cripple, that I can't take much of it, it's too much for me.

Yoko: He's very New York, you know.

John: I'm frightened of it. People are so aggressive, I can't take all that I need to go home, I need to have a look at the grass. I'm always writing about my English garden. I need the trees and the grass; I need to go into the country, because I can't stand too much people.

Right after *Sergeant Pepper* George came to San Francisco.
George went over in the end. I was all for going and living in the Haight. In my head, I thought, "Acid is it, and let's go, I'll go there." I was going to go there, but I'm too nervous to do anything, actually. I thought I'll go there and we'll live there and I'll make music and live like that. Of course, it didn't come true.

But it happened in San Francisco. It happened all right, didn't it. I mean it goes down in history. I love it. It's like when Shaw was in England, and they all went to Paris; and I see all that in New York, San Francisco and London, even London. We created something there – Mick and us, we didn't know what we were doing, but we were all talking blabbing over coffee, like they must have done in Paris, talking about paintings. . . . Me, Burdon and Brian Jones would be up night and day talking about music, playing records, and blabbing and arguing and getting drunk. It's beautiful history, and it happened in all these different places. I just miss New York. In New York they have their own cool clique. Yoko came out of that.

This is the first time I'm really seeing it, because I was always too nervous, I was always the famous Beatle. Dylan showed it to me once on sort of a guided tour around the Village, but I never got any feel of it. I just knew Dylan was New York, and I always sort of wished I'd been there for the experience that Bob got from living around here.

What is the nature of your relationship with Bob?
It's sort of an acquaintance, because we were so nervous whenever we used to meet. It was always under the most nervewracking circumstances, and I know I was always uptight and I know Bobby was. We were together and we spent some time, but I would always be too paranoid or I would be aggressive or vice versa and we didn't really speak. But we spent a lot of time together.

He came to me house, which was Kenwood, can you imagine it, and I didn't know where to put him in this sort of bourgeois home life I was living; I didn't know what to do and things like that. I used to go to his hotel rather, and I loved him, you know, because he wrote some beautiful stuff. I used to love that, his so-called protest things. I like the sound of him, I didn't have to listen to his words, he used to come with his acetate and say "Listen to this, John, and did you hear the words?" I said that doesn't matter, the sound is what counts – the overall thing. I had too many father figures and I liked words, too, so I liked a lot of the stuff he did. You don't have to hear what Bob Dylan's is saying, you just have to hear the way he says it.

Do you see him as a great?
No, I see him as another poet, or as competition. You read my books that were written

before I heard of Dylan or read Dylan or anybody, it's the same. I didn't come after Elvis and Dylan, I've been around always. But if I see or meet a great artist, I love 'em. I go fanatical about them for a short period, and then I get over it. If they wear green socks I'm liable to wear green socks for a period too.

When was the last time you saw Bob?
He came to our house with George after the Isle of Wight and when I had written "Cold Turkey."

Yoko: And his wife.

John: I was just trying to get him to record. We had just put him on piano for "Cold Turkey" to make a rough tape but his wife was pregnant or something and they left. He's calmed down a lot now.

I just remember before that we were both in shades and both on fucking junk, and all these freaks around us and Ginsberg and all those people. I was anxious as shit, we were in London, when he came.

You were in that movie with him, that hasn't been released.
I've never seen it but I'd love to see it. I was always so paranoid and Bob said "I want you to be in this film." He just wanted to me to be in the film.

I thought why? What? He's going to put me down; I went all through this terrible thing.

In the film, I'm just blabbing off and commenting all the time, like you do when you're very high or stoned. I had been up all night. We were being smart alecks, it's terrible. But it was his scene, that was the problem for me. It was his movie. I was on his territory, that's why I was so nervous. I was on his session.

You're going back to London, what's a rough picture of your immediate future, say the next three months.
I'd like to just vanish just a bit. It wore me out, New York. I love it. I'm just sort of fascinated by it, like a fucking monster. Doing the films was a nice way of meeting a lot of people. I think we've both said and done enough for a few months, especially with this article. I'd like to get out of the way and wait till they all. . . .

Do you have a rough picture of the next few years?
Oh no, I couldn't think of the next few years; it's abysmal thinking of how many years there are to go, millions of them. I just play it by the week. I don't think much ahead of a week.

I have no more to ask.
Well, fancy that.

Do you have anything to add?
No, I can't think of anything positive and heartwarming to win your readers over.

Do you have a picture of "when I'm 64"?
No, no. I hope we're a nice old couple living off the coast of Ireland or something like that – looking at our scrapbook of madness.

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Song Stories

“Jessie's Girl”

Rick Springfield | 1981

Rick Springfield manager Joe Gottfried made a deal with producer Keith Olsen: If Olsen produced two of Springfield's songs, Gottfried would build him a studio. Once the deal was made, Springfield -- who had turned to acting in soap operas as his

musical career faltered -- gave Olsen several demos, and one song stood out. "I never really thought of it as a single," said Springfield. "I thought there were better songs on the album, actually." Though the song is about a guy who falls for his best friend's woman, in real life, "Jessie" was a fellow art class student Springfield didn't know that well.

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